

Policy recommendations

This section aims to identify feasible policy recommendations that target key components identified in the Causal chain analysis in order to minimise future impacts on the transboundary aquatic environment. Recommended findings were identified through a pragmatic process that evaluated a wide range of potential findings proposed by regional experts and key political actors according to a number of criteria that were appropriate for the institutional context, such as political and social acceptability, costs and benefits, and capacity for implementation.

In the GIWA Oyashio Current region, Global change and Unsustainable exploitation of fish and other living resources were identified as the priority concerns and, specifically, their respective constituent issues of changes in the hydrological cycle and overexploitation, respectively. This section provides alternative courses of action that may be taken by regional policy makers. The causes of Global change need to be addressed at a global forum rather than within the region.

Feasible policy relevant findings that target key components identified in the Causal chain analysis will be outlined in order to minimise future impacts on the transboundary aquatic environment. Recommended policy options were identified by regional experts and key political representatives. The policy relevant findings presented in this report require additional detailed analysis beyond the scope of GIWA and, as a consequence, they are not formal recommendations to governments but rather contributions to broader policy processes in the region.

Political framework

Politicians and administrative authorities in Russia and Japan are aware of the threat that the priority concerns pose to socio-economic development. Accordingly, a large number of policy initiatives, both national and international, have been instigated. The issue of changes in the hydrological cycle and its influence on the issue of overexploitation in the Oyashio Current region is under consideration

by several international programmes. The Northwest Pacific Action Plan and the Northeast Asian Regional Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) promote intergovernmental mechanisms to facilitate regional cooperation and coordination. Further details of relevant regional organisations and programmes are presented in the Regional definition section under International cooperation.

Policy recommendations

A priority for the Oyashio Current region is to improve the knowledge and understanding of the region's natural environment and to create an intergovernmental agreement between Russia and Japan.

The conclusion of the multilateral (including Russian Federation and Japan) intergovernmental agreement is needed for the:

- Organisation of an international environmental monitoring system in the region.
- Organisation of available information on the health of the environment in the region.
- Creation of an intergovernmental commission with a mandate to coordinate environmental management in the region.
- Comprehensive study of the impacts of future changes in the hydrological cycle and ocean circulation on the fisheries of the Oyashio Current region.

- Promotion of cooperation and integration between the region's national scientific and environmental management institutions in order to share data and techniques with an aim to improve the environmental quality of the entire region for the mutual benefit of both nations.

To address the lack of knowledge, further studies and actions are required, including:

- A comprehensive oceanographic survey of the currents.
- A survey of fish stocks and other bio-resources.
- The development of a model of hydrological and ecological processes in the region which is able to simulate the impacts from anthropogenic activities, such as oil spills.
- The creation of a monitoring network and information management system to regularly assess the ecological quality of the region.
- The development and improvement of the legislative basis at all levels.

Many of the root causes of changes in the hydrological cycle and ocean circulation are global issues that can not be resolved by Russia and Japan alone. These countries can, however, stress the severity of climate change on the natural resource dynamics and human population of Kamchatka and the Kuril Islands in the global forum. The potential future impacts from climate change on the region need to be identified and presented based on scientific studies to enable the formulation of precautionary measures. Climate change needs to be addressed through international cooperation and the implementation of international agreements, such as the Kyoto Protocol.

International organisations, such as the Northwest Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the North Pacific Marine Science Organization (PICES) are aware of the ecological and socio-economic threats from climate change and the overexploitation of fish. They should continue to actively participate in international discussions aimed at mitigating the impacts of global environmental changes on marine ecosystems.